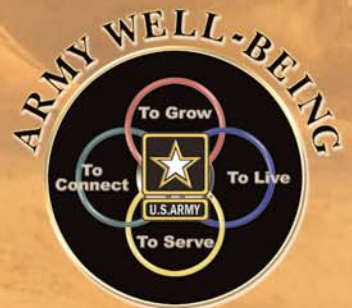


Army Well-Being

www.wblo.org

Spring 2006

**Serving: Active Duty, Guard, Reserve, Civilians,
Retirees, Veterans, and Families**



Army Well-Being

Vol. 4, No. 1

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Army Well-Being is produced in the interest of the members of the Army's Well-Being constituent communities – Soldiers (Active Duty, National Guard, Reserve), Civilians, Retirees, Veterans, and Families. Army Well-Being is an Army-funded magazine produced under the provisions of Army Regulation 360-1. Contents of Army Well-Being are not necessarily the official views of, nor endorsed by the U.S. Government, Department of Defense or the Department of the Army. Army Well-Being is published quarterly, entirely in electronic Portable Document File (PDF) format, and distributed via e-mail subscription through www.wblo.org, as well as available for download.

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On the cover



Soldiers from 1st Bn., 41st Inf. Rgt., 1st AD, scan the landing zone for possible hostile forces in Baghdad.

Tech. Sgt. Russell Cooley IV

DoD continually working to prevent sexual assaults

By Rudi Williams
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON – Sexual assault is one of the most underreported crimes in the military and in society as a whole, a top defense personnel and readiness official said recently.

“Some studies indicate that only 5 percent of sexual assaults are reported,” Air Force Brig. Gen. K.C. McClain, who heads DoD’s Joint Task Force for Sexual Assault Prevention and Response, said. “The highest number we’ve ever seen is about 35 percent. We don’t know where DoD fits in that range, but we’re in there somewhere.”

McClain is the single point of accountability for DoD sexual assault policy matters. The task force, stood up in October 2004, develops policy and programs to improve prevention efforts, enhance victim support, and increase offender accountability.

A DoD directive on the issue was published a year later, and a DoD instruction that expands on the directive is expected to be published shortly.

One task force goal was to remove barriers that prevent victims

from reporting sexual assault, McClain said. “Immediately following a sexual assault, there is an overwhelming sense of loss of control and a sense of powerlessness,” she noted. “For many, the thought of participating in the investigative process is so overwhelming that they chose to get no care rather than to go through that investigative process.”

McClain said sexual assault turns the victim’s world upside down, and the trauma of being assaulted is a shock from which many victims never fully recover. “And the thought that you’re going to have to talk your commander, supervisor, the investigators – all these people are going to know,” she noted. “That’s overwhelming for some people, and they don’t want to deal with it.”

She said some barriers that prevent victims from reporting sexual assault include embarrassment, shame, and not wanting anyone to know what happened to them. Sometimes not understanding the process or misconceptions of what’s going to happen prevent individuals from coming forward.

To help overcome these barriers to reporting, DoD in 2005 introduced a “restrictive re-

porting” option to victims of sexual assault. Victims can come forward and seek counseling and other treatment, but can choose to not have a criminal investigation into the assault opened.

The general said sometimes victims’ initial reaction is: “Stop! Leave me alone! I don’t want to see anybody! I don’t want to do anything!” However, after having time to gather their strength and resources, many victims think about what happened to them and decide to participate in an investigation, McClain said.

A 2005 report to Congress stated that the number of reported sexual assaults in the military increased by almost 40 percent between 2004 and 2005, McClain said. The 1,700 cases reported in 2004 climbed to 2,374 in 2005, an increase of 674 cases.

“Of those 2,374 reports, 435 were restrictive reporting,” McClain noted. “So in a six-month period, in a brand new program that was still be implemented, we still had 435 people who were willing to come forward.”

Of those who chose restrictive reports initially, a quarter later changed their minds and allowed investi-

gations to proceed.

“Although we hate that we have any sexual assaults, we do think that

these numbers indicate that our programs are working,” McClain said. “We’re still in the implementation stage, so we’re not claiming victory, because we know we still have a long ways to go.”

Sexual assault prevention training begins in initial training and continues throughout members’ careers. It’s also incorporated into commanders’ training. “Commanders are the key to sexual assault prevention and response,” McClain said.

Individuals preparing to deploy also receive refresher training on what constitutes sexual assault, how to prevent it, and how to report it while deployed. McClain noted that the incidence rate of sexual assault in Iraq and Afghanistan is lower than it is across the rest of DoD.

“We don’t know for a fact what to attribute that to, but my supposition would be that in the area of operation you’re focused on the mission – quite frankly, staying alive,” she said. “You’re in a tighter group, a tighter envi-



See Sexual Assault on Page 3

NDAA supports an optimistic Army recruiting picture

By Mary Kate Chambers

U.S. Army Recruiting Command

Soldiers across the Army had several reasons to cheer when President Bush signed the National Defense Authorization Act in January.

The law approved raising the maximum combination of cash enlistment bonuses to \$40,000 for Regular Army, doubling the Army Reserve bonus to \$20,000 and increasing the Army's enlistment age to 39 years.

Also approved was a program to allow a \$1,000 bonus for Soldiers who refer a recruit, that goes on to finish basic training and an MOS-producing school. This new incentive allows the whole Army to work as highly-motivated aides for the U.S. Army Recruiting Command cause in helping to keep the Army's ranks filled with quality people.

"I believe the new authorities provided by Congress, such as the \$1,000 per referral bonus and the max enlistment bonus ... will continue this positive trend" of meeting monthly missions, Secretary of the Army Francis Harvey said. He also noted that the Army met recruiting goals for seven months and "the future looks promising."

The \$1,000 Referral Bonus pilot program works on the idea that "every Soldier is a Scout." It is operated through the Sergeant Major of the Army Recruiting Team Web site



– www.usarec.army.mil/smart/.

Regular Army, National Guard or Army Reserve Soldiers serving in a recruiting or retention assignment or receiving Special Duty Assistance Pay for those duties are not eligible for to receive this referral bonus for new recruits. There are exceptions, but members whose duties could be perceived as creating a conflict of interest, as determined by the Secretary of the Army, will also be ineligible for this incentive program.

Soldiers may not refer an immediate family member, and the bonus will be paid in a lump sum once the applicant completes their Basic Training and Advanced Individual Training courses.

"We thank Congress for their recent legislation to provide bonuses such as these," said Lt. Gen. Franklin L. Hagenbeck, Army deputy chief of staff, G1. "We feel very confident that we will be able to reach our recruiting goal for 80,000 this year."

While the Army does not have a single bonus of \$40,000, there are combinations of the various types of cash bonuses that could add up to the \$40,000 maximum. For example, an enlistee can combine an MOS bonus with one for shipping to training within 30 days for a critical MOS, one for higher education, one for airborne training and another for civilian acquired special skills. This marks a significant shift in recruiting incentives, as the Regular Army enlistment bonus had not previously been increased since November 1999, when it went to \$20,000.

For highly-qualified recruits, the six MOSs that fall into this category are Fire Support Specialist (13F); Multiple Launch Rocket System Crewmember (13M); Special Forces Candidate (18X); Satellite Communications Systems Operator-Maintainer (25S); Explosive Ordnance Disposal Specialist (89D);

and Petroleum Supply Specialist (92F). For more information on these, and other MOSs, visit www.goarmy.com.

"That will be used selectively for skills that are hard to recruit. That will not be used across the board and we will use it judiciously, where we need to have it," Harvey said.

Raising the active Army age limit will expand the recruiting pool, provide motivated individuals an opportunity to serve and strengthen the readiness of Army units.

The increase in the age limit makes it the same as the Reserve limit, which was raised in March 2005.

Since that time, 3,309 Soldiers age 35, or older, have enlisted in the Army Reserve.

The standards for older applicants are no different from their younger peers. They are subject to the same standards and eligible for the same incentives.

Experience has shown that older recruits who can meet the physical demands of military service generally make excellent Soldiers based on their maturity, motivation, loyalty and patriotism.

The NDAA also increased the maximum enlistment contract from six to eight years.

Recruiting is "a month-to-month thing and as I said, the rest of the year looks promising, but we're certainly not going to sit on our laurels," Harvey said.

For more information on the Sergeant Major of the Army Recruiting Team, visit the SMART Web site at www.usarec.army.mil/smart/, or call 1-800-223-3735 extension 6-0473

Editor's note: Chambers is Associate Editor of the U.S. Army Recruiting Command's Recruiter Journal. This article was originally published in the February Recruiter Journal.

Sexual Assault

From Page 2

ronment with a sense of you're all in this together. We're all family, and we're all working toward the same mission."

DoD's theme for Sexual Assault Awareness Month 2006 – April 2006 – is "Sexual Assault Prevention Begins with You." McClain emphasized that sexual assault will not be tolerated in DoD.

"Everyone from our most junior member to our most senior member has a role in prevention and response," she said. "It's not a commander's program; it's everyone's responsibility."

Information on DoD's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program can be found at www.sapr.mil. The Army's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program can be found online at www.sexualassault.army.mil.

Army unveils Tattoo policy changes

By J.D. Leipold
Army News Service

WASHINGTON – The Army has revised its policy on tattoos in an effort to bolster recruitment of highly-qualified individuals who might otherwise have been excluded from joining.

Tattoos are now permitted on the hands and back of the neck if they are not “extremist, indecent, sexist or racist.” Army Regulation 670-1, which was modified via a message released Jan. 25, also now specifies: “Any tattoo or brand anywhere on the head or face is prohibited except for permanent make-up.”

For women, allowable make-up would be permanent eye-liner, eyebrows and makeup applied to fill in lips, officials said. They said permanent make-up should be conservative and complement the uniform and complexion in both style and color and will not be trendy.

The change was made because Army officials realized the number of potential recruits bearing skin art had grown enormously over the years.

About 30 percent of Americans between the ages of 25 and 34 have tattoos, according to a Scripps Howard News Service and Ohio University survey. For those under age 25, the number is about 28 percent. In all, the post-baby-boom generations are more than three times as likely as boomers to have tattoos.

As a result of tattoo attitude changes, Army Regulation 670-1, chapter 1-8E (1) has been modified via an ALARACT 017/2006 message.

Additionally, paragraph 1-8B (1) (A) was revised to state: “Tattoos that are not extremist, indecent, sexist or racist are allowed on the hands and neck. Initial entry determinations will be made according to current guidance.”

The Army has never allowed indecent tattoos on any part of the body, G1 officials pointed out.

The new policy allows recruits and all Soldiers to sport tattoos on the neck behind an imaginary line straight down and back of the jawbone, provided the tattoos don’t violate good taste.

“The only tattoos acceptable on the neck are those on the back of the neck,” said Hank Minitrez, Army G1 Human Resources Policy spokesman. “The ‘back’ of the neck is defined as being just under the ear lobe and across the back of the head. Throat tattoos on that portion of the neck considered the front, the ear lobe forward) are prohibited.”

Soldiers who are considering putting tattoos on their hands and necks, should consider

asking their chain of command prior to being inked.

“While the Army places trust in the integrity of its Soldiers and leaders, if a Soldier has a questionable case regarding tattoos, he or she should seek the advice of the local commander through the chain of command,” Minitrez added.

Should a Soldier not seek advice and have tattoos applied that aren’t in keeping with AR-670, the command will counsel the Soldier on medical options, but may not order the Soldier to have the tattoos removed. However, if a Soldier opts not to take the medical option at Army expense, the Soldier may be discharged from service.

The U.S. Coast Guard has a limitation on the size of a tattoo in percentages of a given area that will not exceed 25 percent of the space between wrist and elbow, knee and

ankle, but it does not allow tattoos on the hands or neck.

The Army’s new policy, however, does not mean Soldiers should rush out and have the backs of their necks or their hands entirely covered in decorative art, Minitrez said.

“The Army does not have a percentage policy for tattoos,” Minitrez said. “As long as tattoos do not distract from good military order and discipline and are not extremist, racist, sexist or indecent they’re permitted.”

If a Soldier’s current command has no issue with his or her tattoos, the Soldier should have personnel files so notated that the Soldier is in line with Army Regulation 670-1, officials said. Though not mandatory, having the notation entered serves as back-up documentation at a follow-on command which might feel the Soldier’s tattoos don’t meet Army regulations.



Staff Sgt. Lorie Jewell

Soldiers' saintly honor

Soldiers from “Fighting” 69th Infantry Regiment, New York Army National Guard, march down 5th Avenue during the St. Patrick’s Day Parade in New York City.

Advisory committee recommends big changes to military pay system

By Donna Miles

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON – A committee that's spent the past year studying the military compensation system is recommending sweeping changes that, if approved, would bring military compensation more on par with private-sector compensation.

The Defense Advisory Committee on Military Compensation released details of its recommendations recently and is incorporating them in a final report expected to go to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld by late April.

The proposed package includes two major ideas, Navy Adm. (Ret.) Donald Pilling, former vice chief of naval operations, explained. These include revamping the retirement system so servicemembers receive more pay throughout their careers rather than at their completion, and basing pay on performance rather than longevity and other factors.

Pilling emphasized that any proposed changes to the compensation package would be grandfathered in, so currently serving members would not be affected. The only exception could be in the case that current members are offered the opportunity to voluntarily "opt in" to the new system.

In terms of retirement, the committee recommends: vesting members at 10 rather than 20 years; paying graduated retirement plans ranging from 25 percent of base pay at 10 years to 100 percent at 40 years; establishing a Thrift Savings Plan with government contributions of 5 to 10 percent of base pay; providing "gate pays" at specific service milestones, as determined by the individual services; and delaying payment of the retirement annuity until age 60.

In terms of pay for performance, the committee recommends: revising basing pay on time in grade rather than years of service; and eliminating the "with dependents" and "without dependents" provision of basic allowance for housing so all servicemembers in the same pay grade receive the same allowance, regardless of their family situation.

The proposed system would benefit servicemembers, giving them more upfront cash throughout their careers, Pilling said. He noted that most private-sector compensation packages give 80 percent of their cash up front, deferring just 20 percent for retirement. In contrast, the current military compensation package pays about one-half the total compensation up front and defers the rest.

The committee's recommendations help update the current military retirement system that Pilling said was based on a 1940s-era model. At that time, most members served 30 years, retired in their 50s and typically lived into their 60s, he said. Today, it's typical for servicemembers to retire after 20 years, start second careers, and live longer lives.

Restructuring the compensa-

tion package will provide more options for servicemembers, Pilling said. Rather than offering no retirement benefit short of 20 years, the proposed system would offer a portable retirement system with reduced-level benefits after 10 years, he explained.

If Rumsfeld approves the plan, it will be subject to congressional review before being introduced, he said.

Your teeth may be under 'chemical attack'

By Lt. Col. Stephen M. Keesee

MEDCOM News Service

People may be exposing themselves to chemical attacks that they are not aware of. Chemical erosion of the teeth occurs as teeth are exposed to mild acids over extended periods of time.

The enamel is slowly "dissolved away," and other problems can develop, making future dental treatment difficult. The problem occurs so slowly that it may be years before a dentist recognizes the erosion. By then, extensive rehabilitation is usually required.

What causes this erosion? Beverages with a high acidity are the usual culprits. Fruit juices, coffee and tea, soft drinks, and sports drinks are often consumed in large amounts by the individuals with chemical erosion. Other food items that can cause the erosion include lemons and other citrus fruits, candies, and gums. Chemical erosion can also be caused by gastroesophageal reflux disease, bulimia, and, rarely, exposure to non-food chemicals.

Sometimes the amount consumed is not as important as how the substances are consumed. A single soft drink sipped slowly at intervals throughout the day is just as damaging as a six-pack of soda during the day. The reason for this is that our saliva can neutralize the acid, but it takes about fifteen minutes for this to occur. If a sip is taken every fifteen minutes, the teeth will be constantly bathed in this acid. Because of this, Soldiers in hot environments may be at higher risk when they are drinking these beverages to hydrate during the day.

Tooth enamel exposed to this acid will gradually be worn away, and the process is painless. So an individual will have no warning signs that damage is being done. Early signs of chemical erosion include a smooth, polished appearance of the tooth enamel and a thin whitish line along the gums where the enamel is being de-mineralized.

As the process continues there may be distinct sloping from the gum area towards the center of the tooth, again with a very smooth or polished appearance. The underlying dentin of the tooth may become exposed, but the teeth still may not be sensitive or painful.

If caught before extensive damage occurs, no treatment may be needed. Substituting water for other beverages is the best choice.

Another option would be to simply decrease the amount of exposure time to the acidic food or drink. Consume these things quickly, rather than sipping over an extended time period, and rinse with water afterwards. Chewing a sugarless gum will stimulate saliva flow and increase the acid neutralization.

Finally, the patient should be sure he or she is brushing with a fluoride toothpaste at least twice a day with a soft toothbrush. Supplemental fluorides such as over-the-counter fluoride rinses or a prescription fluoride dentifrice may also be helpful in strengthening the enamel and preventing further damage. Soldiers with questions concerning their dental health should contact their local dental clinic for assistance.

Editor's note: Keesee is the Chief of Prosthodontics at the Benjamin Franklin Village Dental Clinic in Heidelberg, Germany.



Courtesy photo

Severe erosion can cause loss of enamel and major structural changes to the teeth, requiring extensive and expensive restorations.

To Connect

ACAP Online offers tailored transition assistance

Army News Service

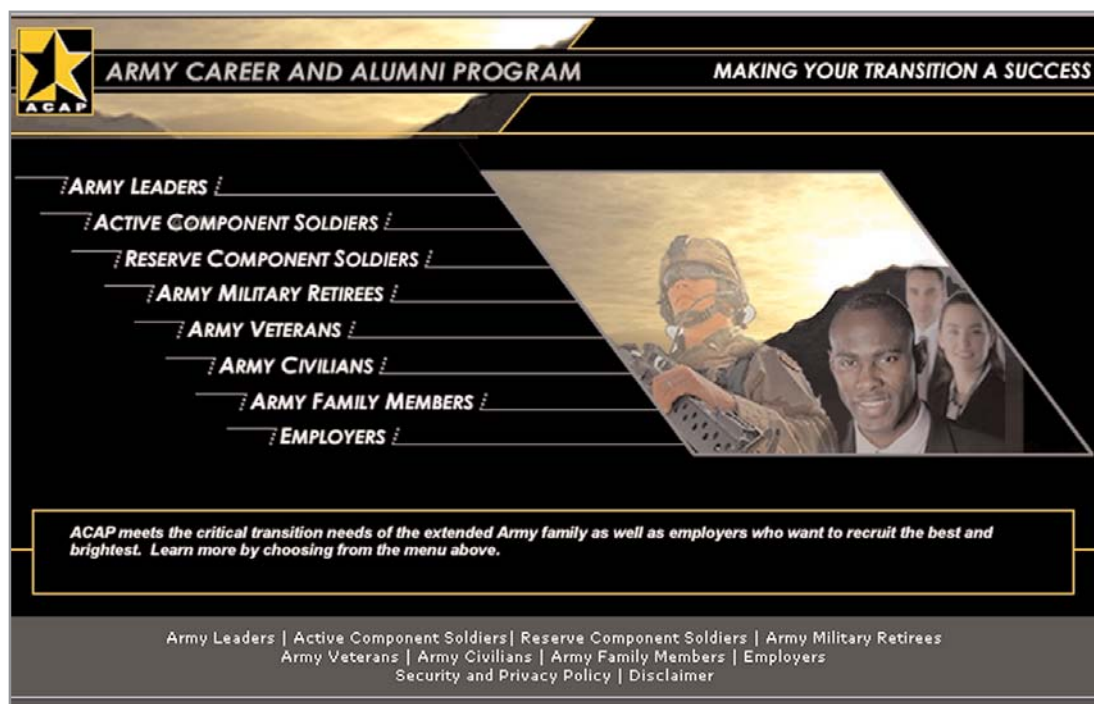
ALEXANDRIA, Va. – The Army Career and Alumni Program has transformed its Web site to meet the changing needs of its various audiences.

With a modern look, the Web site – www.acap.army.mil – now provides faster, more direct access to information through eight user paths, each tailored to a specific client population. The paths encompass the Well-Being constituent groups, and are Army leaders, active-component Soldiers, reserve-component Soldiers, retirees, veterans, DA civilians, family members and employers.

“We realized the need to reach the varied groups, and have changed our Web site to better accommodate those who are eligible for our transition services,” said James T. Hoffman, ACAP director.

ACAP provides transition and employment-assistance services, helping users assess their abilities, create effective resumes, prepare for job interviews and more.

The active component path features a “personal coach” to



ACAP Online – www.acap.army.mil – puts transition services right at fingertips of Army Well-Being constituents.

help users who need guidance researching transition and job-assistance information, skills which Soldiers may be a little rusty on, after serving on active duty. A new path for Army leaders offers

basic information about ACAP.

ACAP Online complements the 38 ACAP centers and 16 satellite offices worldwide that provide transition and employment-assistance services to more than

70,000 individuals each year.

“We think these changes will better accommodate the needs of our Army family and are excited to be able to better serve their needs,” Hoffman said.

Installations Armywide host Retiree Appreciation days

Retiree Appreciation Days (RADs) are a great way for Soldiers, retirees and family members to get up-to-date information on Army retirement benefits. Most RADs are one- or two-day gatherings conducted annually at major Army installations, and they are usually put together by the installation Retirement Service Office (RSO), often with the help of the installation retiree council and other volunteers. These events often feature guest speakers and displays covering topics such as healthcare, retired pay, Survivor Benefit Plan law changes, veterans’ benefits, Social Security, military legal aid, and how retirees can continue to serve the Army.

Many RADs include “county fairs”

with health tests such as blood pressure and vision screening; representatives from numerous agencies; and special retiree events such as a dinner or golf tournament.

Think a RAD would be a good event for you and your family? At right is a list of upcoming RADs. For more information, contact the installation RSO. If your installation isn’t listed, call your installation RSO or visit the Army Retirement Services Web site at www.armyg1.army.mil/retire to get the latest RAD listing.

For additional retiree information, also check out Army Echoes, which is accessible online at www.armyg1.army.mil/rso/echoes.asp.

| | |
|-------------|--|
| April 26 | Amityville, N.Y. (631) 842-6620 |
| April 28-29 | Fort Jackson, S.C. |
| May 6 | Fort Wainwright, Alaska |
| May 20 | Fort Buchanan, Puerto Rico |
| May TBD | Schofield Barracks, Hawaii |
| June 17 | Fort McPherson, Ga. |
| July 8 | Miami, Fla. (sponsored by Fort Stewart, Ga.) |
| July 20 | Fort Monroe, Va. |
| Aug. 4-5 | Tobyhanna Army Depot, Pa. |
| Sept. 1 | Fort McCoy, Wisc. |
| Sept. 8-9 | Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. |
| Sept. 9 | Redstone Arsenal, Ala. |
| Oct. 14 | Fort Monmouth, N.J. |
| Oct. 27 | Fort Meade, Md. |
| Oct. 27-28 | Fort Knox, Ky. |
| Oct. 28 | Fort Leavenworth, Kan. |
| Nov. 3 | Fort Benning, Ga. |

Soldier Show to unveil 'Reveille: Answering the Call'

By Tim Hipps
Army News Service

FORT BELVOIR, Va. — The 2006 U.S. Army Soldier Show will unveil "Reveille: Answering the Call" during a three-performance weekend May 5 through 7 at Wallace Theater.

"The entire idea came from the new Army motto: Call to Duty," said Soldier Show director Victor Hurtado. "For our civilian audience, it may illustrate why people join. For our military audience, it might remind them why — what their initial reasons were and why they continue to serve."

The bottom line, however, remains the same: "Entertainment for the Soldier, by the Soldier," the working motto of Army Entertainment Division.

"We have some really strong voices and really strong performers, so you might see some flash and splash," Hurtado said. "But you might be surprised by how powerful the 'less is more' is in the show, as well. Expect to find moments."

The 22-Soldier troupe will soon embark on a six-month tour of about 100 performances on military installations across the United States, Italy and Germany.

Hurtado credits Army Entertainment Division's 1st Sgt. Tarron Pierce for brainstorming the show's starting point of reveille. He also relies on the creativity of 17 Soldier-performers and five technicians before weaving their artistic strengths into a military storyline.

"With a show like this, a lot of it has to say something, but not all of it has to say something because at the end of the day we also have to entertain," Hurtado said. "Not every scene is going to start with the story of a Soldier. Sections of the show are just about new music or having a good time or just about fun."

Hurtado is reluctant to reveal the complete storyline.

"So much of what the show is [about] will be illustrated at the beginning, but I really don't want



Tim Hipps

Spc. Elisabeth Graham of Fort Jackson, S.C., plays the violin during the U.S. Army Soldier Show's performance of "Breakaway" by Kelly Clarkson.

to give it away," he said. "The show itself will fortify those bits and pieces."

Rhythm and blues, gospel and country music will be featured, along with new renditions of tunes released since the 1960s, coupled with ballroom dancing aplenty.

"I'm looking for our staff to come up with some original lyrical content that will say exactly what we want to say," Hurtado said. "We are an eclectic reflection of what comes to us at the moment. We're not married to anything."

Thirty to 40 songs were being considered a month before the opening show. The list of songs and scenes may not be finalized until opening night, Hurtado said.

Eight veterans of the Army's Margaret "Skippy" Lynn Stars of Tomorrow Talent Contest and/or Military Idol are among the cast and crew that ranges in rank from private first class to captain.

Spc. Richard Sianoya of Fort Irwin, Calif., finished runner-up in the inaugural Military Idol competition. Spc. Serri Sheridan of Fort Polk, La., was best-of-show runner-up in the 2006 Stars of Tomorrow Contest and participated in Military Idol. First Lt. Sonya Moore of the California Army National Guard participated in both programs.

Sgt. Geno Nash of Fort Hood, Texas, and Spc. Adel Nammour of Yongsan, Korea, also competed in Stars of Tomorrow, along with Pfc. Jong Baek Yoon, a Korean augmentee to the U.S. Army. KATUSA Soldiers are fully integrated into a U.S. Army unit and live, work and train with their American comrades.

"I just wanted the guy to come and represent his unit but it's turned into representing his entire country, the Republic of Korea," Hurtado said.

Yoon has also performed at the Korean Embassy in Washington.

Other Military Idol contestants include Staff Sgt. Deneen Murray of Camp Humphries, Korea, and Spc. Lucky Tagaloa of Fort Hood.

Hurtado spotted Hawaii Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Samuel Hesch during auditions for "Miss Saigon" and noted that he bypassed a role in "Cats" to perform in the Soldier Show. Spc. Elisabeth Graham of Fort Jackson, S.C., is a violinist, and Spc. Nina Kazibwe, stationed in Kitzingen, Germany, is a pianist.

First Lt. Alisha Vaughn of Fort Stewart, Ga.; and Spcs. Maceo Keeling of Fort Lee, Va.; John Morris of Fort Huachuca, Ariz.; Alisha Osborne of the New York Army Reserves; Jessica Solorio of Wuerzburg, Germany; and Benjamin Piel of Yuma Proving Ground, Ariz., complete the list of performers.

Sgt. Kristen Austin of Fort Bliss, Texas, is the wardrobe technician. Capt. Christine Lancia of Fort Polk, La., serves as assistant stage manager. Sgt. Jemel Washington of Fort Lewis, Wash., handles video and audio. Spc. Daniel Murray of Fort Hood is an audio specialist. Spc. Bradford Cassels of Fort Bragg, N.C., mans the lights.

For the sixth consecutive year, the Army National Guard is the primary sponsor and partner of the U.S. Army Soldier Show, one of more than 50 programs provided to Soldiers and their families by the U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center. AT&T returns as a corporate sponsor for the third straight year.

Sgt. Irving Berlin wrote the first U.S. Army Soldier Show while on active duty at Camp Upton in Long Island, N.Y. "Yip Yip Yaphank" debuted on Broadway in 1918. During World War II, Berlin created another Soldier Show for Broadway: "This is the Army," which inspired a 1943 movie starring Ronald Reagan.

Editor's note: Hipps writes for the U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center Public Affairs Office.

Constituent Roundup

Active Duty

This Mothers' Day, deployed troops at select locations in Iraq will be able to call home free, courtesy of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. For 24 hours May 14, the VFW will foot the bill for all voice over IP (VoIP) phone calls from 191 phone and Internet cafes across Iraq.

The connection time, according to Operation Uplink manager Linda Ferguson, will allow Soldiers in isolated locations throughout Iraq to connect to U.S. phone numbers via Internet telephone service.

The VFW-sponsored Free Call Day is an extension of the Operation Uplink phone card program, which, since 1996, has provided millions of free phone minutes to deployed servicemembers and hospitalized veterans.

— *Army News Service*

National Guard

With a stroke of Veterans Affairs Secretary R. James Nicholson's pen, all 15 U.S. Cabinet secretaries have now signed a joint statement in support of the Defense Department's Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve organization.

Nicholson became the last Cabinet secretary to sign the document during a ceremony at VA headquarters.

"The Department of Veterans Affairs stands foursquare in support of our Guard and Reserve troops and the ESGR mission," Nicholson said. ESGR has been a very important advocate for the job rights of returning deployed reservists and National Guardsmen, he said.

The Defense Department established ESGR in 1972 to promote cooperation and understanding between reserve component members and their civilian employers.

The joint ESGR statement might be the only document signed by all Cabinet members, said Thomas F. Hall, assistant secretary of defense for reserve affairs.

"This is a very historic day, because today we complete the signing of the statement of support by the entire cabinet," Hall said. "I think it is very fitting, and we planned it this way, to have VA as the last signer of this, because it's the bookends. The first signer was DoD, the last is VA."

Employer Support of the Guard and Re-

serve has more than 5,200 volunteers across the country, Hall said. "They ... make sure that when our young men and women answer the call to the colors and come back, they're able to start their education over [and] go right back to their jobs," he said.

— *American Forces Press Service*

Army Reserve

Lt. Gen. James R. Helmly, Chief of the Army Reserve, addressed a question of participants in a recent affirmation ceremony. "I'm sure there are those who want to know why, in such turbulent, challenging, dangerous times as these, would anyone reenlist into the Army; why these Americans, facing deployment to a war zone — some for the second or third time — are willing to raise their right hands and renew their oath of enlistment."

"Why, you ask? Because they are answering America's Call to Duty! It is a call that summons forth their sense of duty, honor, courage ... I tell you that Americans, such as these, have been answering that call for over 230 years by serving in our Army," Helmly said.

— *U.S. Army Reserve Command*

Civilian Employees

On May 1 the Army's Civilian Personnel Online will begin rolling out "MyBiz" to civilian employees. "MyBiz" provides employees with access to information in their Defense Civilian Personnel Data Systems (DCPDS) automated personnel record, as well as the ability to update several key pieces of information. It is expected that all appropriated-fund employees will have access to the system by June, and non-appropriated fund and local-national employees will be brought into the system in the fall.

To learn more, view a slide show with details on this new application at <http://cpol.army.mil/library/general/myBIZ0306.ppt>.

— *Army Human Resources*

Retirees

Retirees have a chance to enroll in the

Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) or increase their rate of participation during the SBP Open Enrollment Period (open season) from Oct. 1, 2005 through Sep. 30, 2006. The open enrollment period was established by the FY05 National Defense Authorization Act.

For more information on SBP open season, log on to www.armyg1.army.mil/rso/SBPOpenEnrollment.asp.

— *Army Retirement Services*

Veterans

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently announced a special outreach campaign to inform veterans about VA's disability compensation program.

Throughout May, the VA will be conducting outreach efforts in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, New Jersey and Connecticut to reach veterans who may have a disability related to military service, but are not currently receiving VA benefits for their disabilities.

"Our goal is to ensure that all veterans receive the benefits they have earned through their service to our nation," said the Honorable R. James Nicholson, Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

VA has established a special Web site to provide information for veterans interested in applying for VA disability compensation benefits: www.vba.va.gov/SpecialOutreach. Veterans may also visit their local VA Regional Office or call 1-800-827-1000 for assistance.

— *Department of Veterans Affairs*

Army Families

May 12 is Military Spouse Appreciation Day. Without the patriotism, sacrifices and support of Army spouses, we could not sustain this high-quality Army — an Army that is the best it has ever been, according to a letter from the Army's senior leaders.

Although we enlist Soldiers, we retain families, and the Army spouse's support is a critical factor in a Soldier's decision to reenlist. We recognize that the Army spouse's answer to his or her own Call to Duty has been instrumental in sustaining all components of our Army — Active, Army National Guard and Army Reserve.

— *Well-Being Liaison Office*